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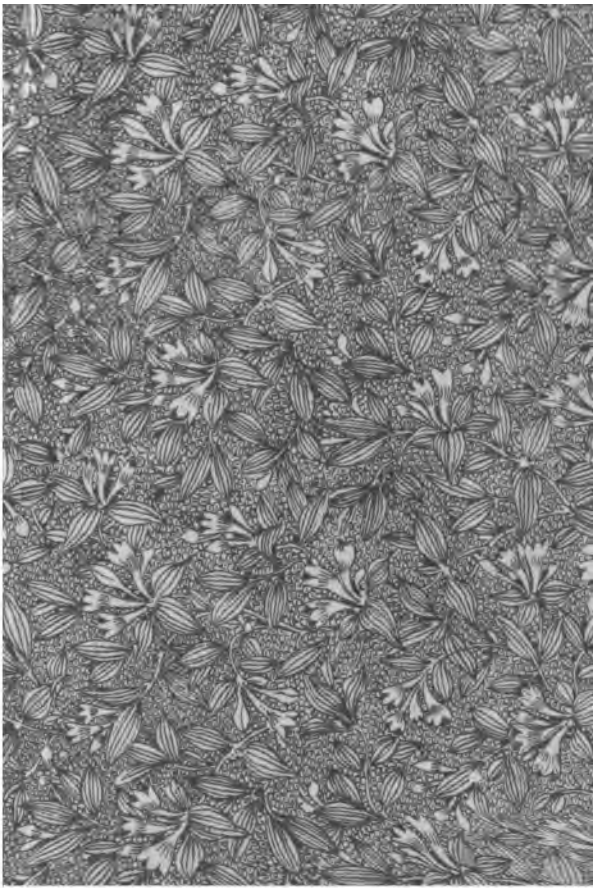
E. E. JENKINS, M.A.



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SECRETARY OF THE WESLEYAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY, AND
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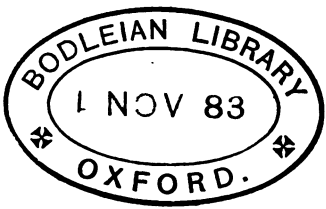
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HEART CHORDS.

MY SOURCES OF STRENGTH.

CHAPTER I.

PRAYING IN THE HOLY GHOST.

PRAYER, which is supposed to be the action of the suppliant, and is so in formal propriety of description, is really the operation of God, to whom prayer is addressed. This, at any rate, is the account of it given to us both in the Old and New Testaments. "I will pour out upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of supplications" (Zech. xii. 10), is an old covenant promise. And the well-known passage of St. Paul may suffice as an exposition of the new covenant doctrine on this subject: "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what

we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26).

Herein lies a profound truth, and a complete answer to the objection that, since God cannot be changed in whatever He purposes to do, prayer can have no power with Him; that whether we pray or not, the course of His government preserves an undeviating line of prescribed causes and effects; that accurate views of the Divine attributes are incompatible with a belief in the efficacy of prayer. If I approached God from without, and asked Him to bestow a gift upon me, my prayer would have no more effect, and bring me no more benefit, than a supplication to the winds or the ocean. In such a case, to kneel upon the beach and implore the sea to be quiet, and to kneel in God's sanctuary and ask for the forgiveness of sins, would be equally a rational and a profitable proceeding.

We do not pray to God from without. It is true that His purposes are unchangeable and His prescience unlimited, that all the details

of His administration are conducted upon fixed principles, and that His will has its way in unbroken and indissoluble links of events ; but we ourselves are a part of this unchanging and unchangeable system.

Prayer is as much a law of the mind of man, as gravitation is a law of matter. Now men resist gravitation; the ability to appropriate this law and make it serve our own ends is one of the triumphs of modern science. Men resist it, and appropriate it, and overcome it: not by altering it, they cannot alter it ; but by changing the weight of those things that are affected by it. A law of God, however immutable it may be, is in its application restricted to certain conditions; when men master these conditions, they can do anything with the law except alter the principle of it. They can oppose it, avert it, neutralise it, and make it destructive or beneficial.

God is an unchangeable being; prayer is the unchangeable ordinance of our intercourse with Himself. When we ask Him for a blessing,

we are acting in harmony with that unalterable system of giving and receiving by which our communion with Him is sustained. God is as much in the asking as in the giving—I mean in the law which makes us ask ; and when we ask in accordance with His will, He is the spirit of the prayer itself.

Prayer cannot change God's purpose, but prayer is in God's system of purposes. For instance, take any day of our life—take this day; we suppose that its events are pre-ordered by the all-knowing One. But he determines these events in conjunction with us, and not irrespective of us. A certain state of the body will depend upon our responsible use of food; a certain state of the mind and certain acts will depend upon our use of prayer; there are particular motions that will be impressed by God upon my will, that will not be impressed i I do not pray ; the results of prayer are as u changeably determined as the laws of day night, or the seasons of the year. If any were to say "You need not attend Divine

vice, for the decrees of God cannot be revoked, and you will be equally benefited by staying away, you cannot change anything;" a plain answer will show that this is a sophism, and not a very deep sophism either. However you may use the service, you cannot be the same persons you would have been if you had not gone. By going you have altered the day entirely; new trains of thought are awakened, new resolutions formed, actions corresponding thereto, perhaps begun, certainly arranged for; and the transaction of prayer on your part, and of listening on His part, are affected by the stimulus of association: new life is given to desire; wants existing already are more intensely felt.

It will help us to answer objections against prayer, and to relieve the perplexities of an imperfect knowledge, if we bear in mind that we never approach God *from without.* The ordinary language in which the act of prayer is described makes it difficult for us to realise this truth. There is the image before us of a Being who is waiting to hear our requests; we

cry unto Him that He may have compassion on us, and permit us to touch the sceptre of His reconciliation; or we seek the interposition of His hand to deliver us, of His counsel to direct us; and we imagine that we have the want on this side, and He the supply on that; we hope to move Him by supplication, and that He will hear us when we call upon Him; and if our prayer is followed by no result which we can mark or define to ourselves, we think that it is not His pleasure to answer us, we have *asked amiss;* several reasons for the failure will instantly occur to us—a lack of earnestness, submission, consistency, or faith. Failures of this kind are apt to follow one another, and they abate the desire, and loosen the confidence of prayer. On the other hand, it sometimes happens that prayer is so suddenly productive that we have the answer before the petition is finished; the blessing we seek seems to come before it is sought, and other mercies never asked flow towards us in a stream of grace, *and we are* as much perplexed by the arrival

and fulness of a blessing that cost us hardly a prayer, as we are by the apparent denial of another blessing for which we have long asked.

The explanation of this inequality in the result of prayer is to be found in the circumstance that prayer comes from the Holy Spirit, while it seems to come from us. The energetic fervour and undoubting faith with which we sometimes besiege the throne of grace are not our own ; they are the Spirit's gifts. He seems to be the worshipper, and *we* His temple. When we hesitate to accept our adoption, and fear to presume to say, Father, He cries within us, *Abba!* Have we not found ourselves uttering the endearing language of children almost unconsciously ; the sweetest words have been spoken to God, the fragmentary lispings of childhood, words of simple truthfulness and trust, which none but a child would think of saying, or could say ; and then we have reconsidered the language, and have pronounced it presumption, and the thought a delusion ! How

is this? In the first instance the Spirit spoke within us; in the second, the reconsideration and doubt were our own.

We are hereby cautioned against a morbid analysis of every feeling that the Spirit may awaken. Am I a child of God or am I not? is *the* question of our life. And when the Spirit has once cried within us, Father, it is ungrateful to submit this sign to a daily test; it is better to go on crying, *Father!* The great matter is to have the heart *right* with God, which means, true to God; open, candid, sincere, an understanding between you and Him, no hidden sin, no guilty or doubtful reserve, no fear to speak out what God and you know to be the truth. Let there be this unison of heart, and the Spirit will move with the loving freedom of His own nature, for, like the wind, He loves to blow as He listeth. He knoweth the mind of God, He knoweth your mind, He glorifies Christ, for he takes of Christ's and shows it unto you; He exalts you, for He takes of yours and shows it unto Christ; and asking, giving, and receiving, are

the natural operations of fellowship with the Trinity.

In this view how certain passages become luminous in their signification: "Ye shall ask what ye *will*, and it shall be done unto you;" "Ask and receive, that your joy may be full;" "*Whatsoever* ye shall ask in my name, I will do it;" "Open your mouth wide and I will *fill* it;" "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Not limiting His gifts to the measure of our request, but meeting the unutterable longings of the Spirit's intercession.

But while God the Spirit's work in prayer throws great light upon supplication as it may have reference to ourselves, it also helps us to understand how my prayer can affect you, and your prayer touch me. I have known thoughtful men who have confessed a doubt as to the relative efficacy of prayer, while they have never for an instant questioned its gracious and inestimable effects upon the petitioner himself. They believed in the virtue of public prayer, because

those who hear it and join in it are themselves made suppliants thereby; and each one is blessed by having a prayerful attention fixed upon God. But how a prayer of mine may affect a person who is not joining me, who is distant from me, who is ignorant of the fact that I am praying for him, and perhaps has no sympathy with prayer himself, this was the difficulty they found it hard to explain.

I am satisfied that all obscurity on this subject will disappear if we consider the omnipresent dwelling of the Spirit in men's hearts. If I am moved to intercede for a friend, the Comforter who instructs and inspires that intercession is present in the heart of the friend who is the object of it. The Spirit cries in me on his behalf. I cannot doubt this, for I am led out o my usual form of remembering him; a ne sympathy is stirred; longings for his salvatio or that some other good may be granted to hi are awakened in me, and are too intense to fi quiet and orderly expression; the broken c *of a passion* not under command plainly at

the presence of Him who maketh intercessions with groanings which cannot be uttered; and at the same moment, He is in the heart of my friend, who may be near me, who may be at the other end of the earth, in the next room, in the next hemisphere, it matters not; the Spirit is praying for him in me, and answering His own prayer in him. I say, a friend, any one whose good I seek. I cannot reach him with my hand, he is distant; I cannot speak to him; I may be so circumstanced, or he may be, that no communication can be made between us; or, on the other hand, he may be close to me, and yet as far as the poles in sympathy; and intercourse on the subject that lies near my heart may be simply impossible in either case. But whether sympathetically remote or geographically distant, prayer suffers not the slightest impediment; neither material space nor the vaster space of alienation can affect the Holy Ghost. Our minds all over the world, commune through the One mind that is present in them all.

We have a beautiful illustration of this in the position of Ephes. vi. 18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." This passage is part of an exhortation that begins at the 14th verse, "Stand, therefore," &c., and then there follows a description of the armour of God, in the panoply of which we are supposed to stand. The military language of weapons, offensive and defensive, is exquisitely appropriate in a description of our adversaries; we are to oppose to the wiles of the devil, and to the principalities, the powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickednesses in high places, the arms constructed, forged, fashioned for us in the armoury of God; the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, &c., all this description occurs in the passage parenthetically. So that the exhortation without it would read, "Stand, therefore, with all prayer, *with all kind of* prayer and supplication, pray-

ing in every season in the Spirit, in watching, importunity, and supplication, *concerning all saints.*" Let this be a special topic of intercession; not the saints of your church, but for God's entire army, as if He had said, "Stand, soldiers, for guard or for fight." And remember that when you are completely equipped, from helmet to sandals, your weapons are of no use to you without prayer; that a soldier must have a brave heart as well as a sharp sword, the energy of inspiration as well as the vigour of sinew and the precision of discipline.

Stand, therefore, or *fight praying*, and especially for all those who are in the field with you. Here Paul gives us a sublime picture of God's vast battle-field and His armed saints, a number without a census, praying for each other in the Holy Ghost, who is the pervading mind of the army. Every soldier should know that his comrade is praying for him. This is the true communion of saints.

Moreover, the Holy Ghost enlarges the meaning of our prayers; for when we pray for the

whole Catholic Church, He gives His own rendering to the petition, and embraces large numbers that we exclude from that Communion. When two little sects of Christians misunderstand each other, and for some contemptible variation of opinion, deny to each other the claims of Christian fellowship ; and when praying for believers, they restrict the application of the term to what they consider the qualities of a saint, the Holy Ghost makes these miserable children of God pray for each other; He accepts their respective intercessions, and answers them according to His own definitions. "I will give unto this last even as unto thee. . . . . Is thine eye evil because I am good" (Matt. xx. 14, 15)?

CHAPTER II.

PRAYING IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.

To pray in the Holy Ghost and to pray in the name of Christ are distinct conditions of prayer, and must be viewed separately, although either of them is an ample and complete assurance in itself of the efficacy of prayer. To obtain anything in the name of another, supposes that your own name is an insufficient warrant. In the negotiation by which you secure it, your own personality is lost altogether. Thus, a servant who executes transactions of credit, signs by procuration his master's name for large transfers of property. Thus, an ambassador personifies the majesty of the country he represents; he has no personal recognition whatever when he sits in the councils of foreign potentates; they acknowledge in him simply the *name* of his sovereign. So in familiar life we frequently do business by proxy, investing a subordinate agent

with our own reputation and credit, sometimes for his benefit, sometimes for the expedition of a personal duty. But in neither of these senses of assuming a name, do we make mention of Jesus Christ in our prayers. We may be said, it is true, to traffic with another's credit, and to represent the authority of a sovereign, in some conditions of our intercourse with God; but praying in the name of Jesus implies a closer union than *service*. There is one word, not in the text, which must be read with it, "If ye shall ask the *Father* anything in My name, I will do it." "My Father," He says in another place, "and your Father, My God and your God" (John xx. 17). Here, then, we have the members of one family; and prayer rises, from outside knocking and supplication, into the tender confidences of family intercourse.

We ask in the name of Christ because w have put on that name, as a woman by marria puts on the name of her husband, and becon a member of the family into which she *married*. She takes by formal and sol

covenant his name, his rank, his house, his property. She is his joy, and he her pride; they rejoice and they weep together; the request of one is the desire of both. The name which the husband confers and the wife accepts, covers the earthly destiny of both while both live. When she asks for anything in the husband's name, she brings with her whatever that name merits, whatever it can purchase, whatever it can demand. She utters the wish, but the request is his; to deny her, is to deny him; to give her the answer of favour, is to do homage to him. When all the conditions are present, this, of course, is the perfection of earth's felicity.

A church is a family; the union of love, the worship of respect, the nurture of wisdom, the increase of God, and the diffusion over all, in just measure, of work, of care, of responsibility, of success. In the Scriptures our union with Christ, and all the wonderful states and privileges involved in it, are described in the language of marriage affinities, covenants,

and felicitations. Nay, more than this ; it would be incorrect to say that marriage is a symbol of our union with Christ. This *is* a marriage ; it is the original of the earthly pattern. It is clearly affirmed in the New Testament ; but in the old prophets there are exquisite foreshadowings of a truth not then distinctly understood. "Thy Maker is thy husband : the Lord of Hosts is His name" (Isaiah liv. 5); "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isaiah lxii. 5). The lamentable backslidings of Israel are frequently depicted under the illustration of marriage infidelity. The preaching of Ezekiel and Hosea is especially adorned by imagery of this kind. Moreover, the name of the Lord is used as an argument of deprecation in the prayers of Moses and Samuel, as if somehow that name were bound up in holy and inseparable alliance with the fate of His people : "Do not abhor us for Thy name's sake" (Jer. xiv. 21); "What wilt thou do unto Thy great name?" (Josh. vii. 9); "The Lord will not forsake His people for Hi-

great name's sake" (1 Sam. xii. 22); "I had pity for mine holy name" (Ezek. xxxvi. 21); "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake; I will sanctify my great name, and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (Ezek. xxxvi. 22,23). This is almost the language of conjugal unhappiness and reconciliation. When Jehovah becomes incarnate in the dispensation of the New Testament, we see at once that He is the husband of His Church.

In Matt. ix. 15 He calls Himself *the* bridegroom, and thus announces the fulfilment of a whole cycle of Old Testament prophecies and figures. "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." This answer was addressed to the disciples of John in direct allusion to what the Baptist had said before. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the

bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice" (John iii. 29). He calls himself the friend of the bridegroom, because it was his duty in the mystic ceremony to lead the Church to Christ; and for the same reason the Lord calls His apostles the children of the bride-chamber.

The marriage parables of Christ are all to the same effect—the virgins, the wedding garment, the marriage supper, and others. These references would not be complete without an allusion to the words of St. Paul and to the vision of St. John. The former exhorteth husbands to "love their wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it" (Eph. v. 25); and he concludes his singularly exquisite descriptions and lessons on this subject with the words, "This is a great mystery, but I speak of Christ and His Church" (Eph. v. 32). "Come hither," said the angel to the seer of the Revelation, "and I will *shew thee* the bride, the Lamb's wife. And

saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. xxi. 2, 9).

Then we have the Epithalamium, or marriage ode, chanted on the occasion, "Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. xix. 6, 7, 9). And at an angel's dictation, John was commanded to write down these words, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb;" the angel adding, as the prophet wrote, "*These are the true sayings of God.*" Let the light of all these statements shine upon the verse, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John xiv. 14). Remember that in communion with the Father we have lost our own name; personally, and in His sight, we are without a name. He found us nameless, for we had not a name of any honourable distinction to lose or merge—that is, in His sight we had no position when He found us.

We were as sheep going astray; as a prodigal wandering from home in rebellion, dishonour, and penury. The Saviour describes our condition in one word, *lost.* Without a name, without a home, without repute, He found us, for we were sought out; He found us with the brand of a sinful shame upon our hearts; no other eye pitied us, no other hand beckoned us. He allured us back, and spoke comfortably unto us. "*Return unto Me*," said He, "*and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name*" (Isaiah lxii. 2); and He gave us His own name, and our miserable self was hidden and lost in the lustrous brightness of Christ! That name is ours, its renown belongs to us; the vast treasures of grace, power, and bliss, procurable by its warrant are ours. Everything is ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

The power of prayer must be in proportion to our absorption in Christ. It is the conscious weight of His name that gives its energy to faith. When that name is not predominant in

our minds, we naturally dwell upon our own unworthiness, the forfeiture of our personal right to anything, the frequent failure of our petitions, and a whole train of disheartening considerations will follow, producing distrust—the fatal sickness of prayer. Under that disease it is absolutely unavailing ; the hand that should grasp the blessing is paralysed, the feet that should take us to the footstool of grace are crippled, every energy is relaxed, impotent, and inert.

Whether it be understood, and can be explained, or not, the fact is clear and absolute, that distrust blocks up the way to God, and no prayer can pass to him. The great apostle, St. James, our Lord's brother, declares in his Epistle that, while God giveth liberally and upbraideth not, the man who prays must ask in faith, nothing wavering ; and that he whose mind is tossed to and fro upon the waves of distrust must not think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

I would not be understood to teach here that

no prayer can prosper unless faith be perfect in its stability, for then how could we pray for faith at all ; but the point enforced is this, that when we ask God to grant a blessing, the chief condition of our receiving it is a belief that He will give it. "*What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*" (Mark xi. 24). It is the name of Christ, and this only, that gives such a confidence. We go out of ourselves entirely as to the ground of our expectation ; we are simply in need ; that is our concern, for the supply of that need we bring the warrant of another. With His name in our hand, let me rather say, with His name written upon the covenant register of our love, and upon the erasure of our own names, we can no more fail with the Father than He can. When we fail, He fails ; the promise of the Father is addressed to Him and to us alike ; His name gives us His position, His authority, His claims.

So closely does faith unite our spirits to Christ, that parts of the same body are not more intimately organised. This is just St.

Paul's account of it. We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; so that when we pray in His name it is as if He prayed, and He does pray. "I will pray the Father." He prays for each of His followers. The presentation of Himself at the right hand of God is prayer; He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

This nearness of fellowship with Christ, bound up with Him as we are, will explain the "anything" of the verse, "*If ye shall ask anything in My name*," anything that Christ's dearest companion, the Church, or any of its members, would ask. This is the illimitable license of love, "*anything whatever* ye shall ask." It is not supposed that such a license will be abused by caprice. The prayer of a depending love to a conferring love will not be irrational, for that would be disrespectful; it will interpret the "whatever" and the "anything" by the extent of its wants, by the rights it is permitted to assume; and by the proved tenderness, truth, and capacity of the loved one. "Thy Maker is

thy *Husband*" (Isaiah liv. 5); He gives the license—*anything*, implying not merely range of request, but all the details of a busy, needy, anxious, and often timid love.

The endearments of such a state are not sustained by great services, but are rather provoked by the lighter, the more minute expressions of mutual regard, with which a stranger intermeddleth not, and would not understand if he did. Whatever ye shall ask; whatever concerns you, concerns Him; if in itself it be a trifle, it is not a trifle to Him if it affects you. In everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be known unto Him; casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for His own.

And now, in what form is the answer promised? *I* will *do* it. The answer not only comes through Him, but is accomplished by Him. I procure it, I will send it. In the 16th chapter of John, the bestowment is ascribed to the Father: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." There *is no confusion* here. We pray to the Father in

Christ's name, and the Father's love is in the gift, although Christ's hand bestows it. The blessed Trinity bestows; the Father granting, the Son procuring, the Spirit dispensing.

But Christ, being the Head of His Church, the incarnate Saviour of our souls, having in His and our flesh dwelt among us, possessing everything except frailty and sin in common with us; our sacrifice upon God's altar, our Daysman before God's tribunal, our husband in God's family, our companion in the fatigues, dangers, and changes of life's pilgrimage, strong, devoted, inseparable, who has in His own charge the mysteries of our future being, the promise is more intelligible to us because it seems more naturally ordered, when Jesus says "I will *do* it;" not "I will give," but "*do* it." Here is not simply the dispensing of gifts, but the operation of a continual help. Whatsoever we desire to have done, He will do it. It occurs to us oftentimes that we know what we desire to have done for us, and we do not know by what means it can be done. "If ye shall ask any-

thing," and ask erroneously, as ignorant of the way in which your desires may be accomplished, I will not withhold the blessing on this account, whether you understand means and processes, or not. You want to have something done, I will do it. The fact of your asking implies that something is wrong, something is needed. "I will repair the wrong, I will supply the need."

The Lord's loving and doing! What a wonderful loving and doing it is! Loving and doing, through the day, through the night, in seasons of pain, in crises of embarrassment and anxiety; loving and doing, when our own love to Him is changeful, when we forsake His way, murmur against His will, forget His presence, and cherish tempers unlovely, and therefore unlike Him. Loving and doing when others cease to love and to do for us, when they are taken from us or themselves desert us, when we mourn in loneliness, or in the deeper desolation of a great hope, in which we had embarked everything, wrecked; loving and doing, the *heart and* the hand both ours and always ours!

CHAPTER III.

CHASTISEMENT.

THE image of the family is still before us in the verse—"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him" (Prov. iii. 11; Heb. xii. 5); not family intercourse but family discipline, by which I do not mean the disciplining application of general household rules, although this view is not to be excluded, but a particular ministry of educating means adapted to the age, constitution, and natural parts of each child; the Father addressing His lessons, His restraints, and His encouraging words of acceptance and blessing to every separate member of His family. That part of the training process to which the verse directs us is chastening and rebuking. The original word rendered chastening means to bring up, to teach, to educate; but it also means to restrain, to rebuke, to

punish, all of which meanings, especially the last, belong to this verse. My son, think not lightly of the Lord's discipline, nor be discouraged—that is, do not fail nor give up hope when the Lord rebukes thee.

The principle of educating discipline is the assertion of future good over present inclinations. The child's life is beautiful; growth is equally charming, if not so profitable as maturity. But human life cannot direct its own steps; it would be unnatural to find controlling wisdom in a child's mind: the presence of such a power would be incompatible with that delicious abandonment to the impressions and impulses of the moment, which is the condition of our earliest muscular and intellectual growth. It is the duty of the parent to bring the wisdom which is profitable to direct, the ever-following eye and ruling hand, not to administer a hard restraint, but to interpose between natural development and unhealthy licence, that the child may grow up a man and not a fool, the conqueror of abuse and not its victim. In

parent's mind there is an image—the perfect man ; in the parent's hand there is a child, impressive, pliable, advancing. In educating his son, he works up towards the realisation of the model in his mind. If it be one of the finest triumphs of art to hew out a statue from a block of stone, and by strokes of genius, happy and elaborate, to impress even upon marble the dainty softness and breathing life of a human form, how much more difficult and noble the success of a parent's educating skill, when the son comes forth a man, the noblest of God's works !

How has that inexpressive courtesy and high propriety been acquired, that frank transparency of character, that instant response in sudden changes of expression to every sentiment of truth and honour ; how have those stores of truth and knowledge been accumulated, and whence has come the art of a modest and almost unconscious adroitness in the use of acquirements? How has it been brought about that the severest habits of application have not

touched the simplicity and ardour of the child's affections? You observe with a kind of wondering curiosity, power, love, intelligence, grace, so exquisitely harmonised. Ask the father to give you the process by which the result was obtained. He will tell you it was the ascendancy instantly maintained of his own will over the will of the child; an ascendancy not always felt by the child, but always present. Education was not a work of mutual agreement, not a smooth interchange of affectionate service. On the parent's part it was the administration of checks and incentives; on the child's, of work, submission, and gratitude. The father will tell you of contentions, murmurings, discouragements, weeping; his reluctant severity again and again applied until the distasteful duty was done, or the neglected work resumed. Perhaps darker scenes chequered the course of his training; but the product of his work is a youth prepared to play the part of a *man*, the most munificent contribution which can be offered to the world by one of its families.

I am sorry to add that the contribution is as rare as it is munificent. In many homes, alas! and capable homes too, disciplinary training is unknown. It is imagined that children will get right in the end. I presume because they have been wrong from the beginning. In fairy tales the sculptor does his work without tools or labour; the statue walks out of the block by the force of a wish or a wand, and a castle is built, furnished, and peopled, in a night. In the same region, but in no other, a boy, through the unrestrained and unwatched impulses of nature, will become a noble youth and a virtuous, an accomplished, a perfect man.

Let us now turn from the earthly to the heavenly home. By the heavenly home I do not mean *heaven*, but the sphere of our probation, that part of our Father's house in which He trains His children for eternity. The following verse shall furnish us with the transition—"We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the

Father of Spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure" —that is, as they saw meet, "but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. xii. 9, 10). You will here percieve two exhortations; the first refers to the cultivation of a proper sentiment and temper respecting the Father's household rules; the second tells us how to behave when we ourselves happen to be the subject of His rebuke.

Despise not the Lord's training, think not lightly of it. Think it not an unnecessary measure that your inclinations should be crossed, that the guidance of your steps should be taken out of your own hand. At first sight it seems a strange thing that it should be needful to exhort the children of our heavenly Father not to despise or think lightly of His discipline. But, as in the case of our own sons and daughters, they may have a full-hearted affection for us, and yet, either on principle, or more probably through a persistent love of their own way, they may regard our discipline with a faint esteem.

They do not say that any course we may think proper to take is a mistaken one, they love us too much to be disrespectful ; but possibly our plans have been silently voted an error, and with something approaching to a generous pity, they submit if we persist ; sometimes an ill-concealed flippancy will mar the grace of the submission, and all this time they have a deep love for us.

This affectionate tolerating a parent's government, instead of heartily accepting it, and working with it, must injuriously affect every department of the training ; and, worse than all, its tendency is to divide from a child's love that worshipful esteem, which is the proper basis of family education, and the only stable bond of family union. We see from hence the propriety of the exhortation—think not lightly of the Lord's general discipline. When there is found no occasion to rebuke you, to convince you of a fault by the chastisement of word or deed, every day of your life furnishes a reason for the line upon line of the Lord's teaching, for the stroke upon stroke of the

Lord's shaping Spirit. You may hear His word if you listen for it, and see His hand if you look for it, in every day's events. To pass a day without taking Him into its business, no matter how light, how trivial that business may be; to make no preparation by renewal of prayers and covenants for whatever the day may bring forth; to step into the path of duty with heedless feet, I will not say with self-confidence, but without a conscious commending of yourself to God; all this is lightly esteeming our Father's discipline.

Wherefore does He ordain for you the circumstances of the day? Why does He send its blessings, and lead to its transactions, and permit its reverses? To teach, to train, to mould the spirit of His child; to make him like His firstborn, the express image of His own person; and that day is a lost day when we are no nearer the image of the Christ in the evening, than we were in the morning. That time might have been omitted from the number of our days. We do not mean to

offend our heavenly Father, but this habit of unintentionally doing without Him is the road which leads us away from Him, is the reason why with Christ in our creeds, and books, and forms, and upon our lips, there is so little of Christ in our life. We seem to regard God—I speak now of His children—as simply a fountain of good, unto whom we resort for supplies, and a refuge to whom we can fly from danger.

In this way the son who objects to the training of home, is very glad to receive the good things of home. We forget, or do not care to cherish, the purpose for which we obtain blessings and escape dangers. It is not that a present want may be satisfied or an imminent peril averted, it is for the promotion of growth, to minister to the development and progress of His children, that our Father attends us day by day. While we are enjoying His favours, He is intent upon our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. He is pleased when we are happy, but His mind is in the future, upon the consummation of His training. He longs to

see us perfect as He is perfect; and if we take the present benefits of His treatment without sending out our minds with His mind into the future, aspiring to become what He so earnestly intends to make us, we hinder what He has set His heart upon, and are guilty of lightly esteeming His educating care.

There are many who never think of taking this view of divine grace, and yet they speak of adoption, and childhood, and their heavenly home; they have no sympathy with the future of their Father's mind, no assiduity in promoting in themselves that spiritual culture in which the parent finds the recompense of his pains. What a mercy that He checks this thoughtlessness and practical disrespect by rebukes!

This brings us to the second exhortation—"Faint not when thou art rebuked of Him." If the general household rules are not sufficient to make me diligent, and obedient, and teachable; if I have grown indifferent to them, or cherished any errors respecting their necessity *if I am* careless, worldly, self-confident,

sharper discipline is at hand, for I am still His child. This is the root of all His administrations, still His child, the offspring part of His own nature. We know not the silent yearnings of His heart towards us, we wonder that He can suffer so much disobedience in His house, that He is not wearied out by so incessant a misconduct ; that we who give more pain than pleasure, and cause more loss than profit, should still remain within the doors of home, sharing its tender and sumptuous ministries, and sustaining in our rank and expectations the position of heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

We are children, there is the secret of His forbearance, His inextinguishable love ; but there also is the explanation of His rebukes : God dealeth with you as with sons. Let us recall the exact signification of the word "rebuke." Its first and strictest meaning is to *convince.* You may reprove a person without convincing him that your censure is just ; it is a higher effort to persuade him that he is in fault.

The sufferings that God lays upon us are not mere rebukes, they are persuasions to think as He does, to bring our will, not into sullen submission, but into consenting accord with His own; which means, to raise us from the instinct fellowship of a babe into the nearer and loftier union of judgment with judgment, purpose with purpose, pursuit with pursuit.

I do not say that no other mode than suffering will accomplish this end; there have been eminent saints who have not known much tribulation, but in these cases there has been a rare coincidence of helps from temperament, occupations, and society. But, as a rule, we cannot think as God thinks concerning ourselves, without suffering; and this chastisement is more or less severe according to the nature of the result intended to be produced. The world and the flesh are the veil that hides our God from us; the enemy of faith and purity is within us; the heart is deceitful above things. These are the impediments to clearness of judgment respecting our

which suffering promotes. What new light dawns upon us when health is taken away! It is like the drawing up of a blind in a darkened room. How much better we know ourselves; how rapidly we acquire heavenly knowledge. Our Father's will stands out so clearly from our own, and He never appears to be so wise, so gentle, so good, as when pain leaves us no other support. How we begin to revise our estimate of things! What a different shape they assume; what a different figure represents their value when we readjust the scale of our interests, our self-importance, our poor ambitions, our ridiculous pretensions, our miserable jealousies, envies, and disputings; our pursuits, pleasures, and vexations; our censoriousness, uncharitableness, and adulations; how changed they look within the four walls of a sick room which we are compelled to keep from day to day! How few our words become, how many our thoughts, how many our prayers! When the first fight and struggle is over, the rebellious impatience and murmuring with which we ex-

countered the trial, how quietly we lie, with every power of our soul whispering, "It is the Lord," the Father, "let Him do what seemeth Him good." More than this, how much nearer we are brought to the Great Sufferer.

Here is really the purpose of the affliction. Our Father corrects, alters, shapes us according to the likeness of His beloved Son, to whose image we are predestinated to be conformed. The approximation to that image advances more rapidly when the believer is in pain, weakness, and sorrow. When we suffer, we suffer with Him. As man He suffers no more, but as God, with whom there is no future and no past, those years of His travail on earth are as present to His mind as when their memorable events transpired. And when He lifts the latch of your chamber He brings those sorrows with Him, but He brings with Him also the triumphs which those sorrows won for Him, and one of those triumphs is the ability to help you. He places at your service the sympathies of His experience, and your heart

burns within you while He opens the meaning of the words.* Thus it behoved Christ to suffer for you, and thus it behoveth you to be a partaker of His sufferings. And as the day grows to dusk, as the affliction deepens and night sets in, and He makes as though He would go on His way, Oh, the longing with which you cry out in prospect of the darkness, "*Abide* with me, for it is towards evening, and my day is far spent." And He remains to tarry with you, and the evening meal is laid out, the sweetest portion of the day. You give Him of your faith, He gives you of His love, and in the breaking and dispensing of these dainties, His presence manifests such a glory that the night is lightened up as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to you as to Him. I have mentioned the suffering of sickness, but the same consolations apply to every class of trouble. If you do not feel the glory of suffering, do not faint, He will come, He will not tarry.

* Luke xxiv. 32.

CHAPTER IV.

STRENGTH MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.

(II. Cor. xii. 9.)

THERE have been many conjectures on the subject of St. Paul's thorn in the flesh. In making this personal matter a secret he consulted a natural reticence, and, perhaps, the profit of his readers: for if the communication of it had been a help to the force of his teaching it would not have been withheld. It therefore seems to be impertinent to allow curiosity to meddle with it. For every purpose of edification, it is enough to learn that about fourteen years before the time at which he was writing his second letter to the Corinthians, a very sore trial befel the Apostle. He compares it to a stake driven through his flesh; for this expression is probably a more correct rendering of his meani than the commonly accepted *thorn* in the f

A man who was such a master of pain a

Paul, to whom suffering was a constant companion and a familiar friend, must indeed have been convulsed by the acuteness of an anguish from which he repeatedly sought to be delivered. I apprehend that the trial, whatever it was, might have been expected to yield to prayer, that its removal would have involved no miracle, that an ordinary Christian, groaning under a similar, or as great a calamity, would have as rational a hope of deliverance as Paul when he besought the Lord to have his burden lifted from him. Otherwise the verse, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness," would have no application for us.

But before we make such a use of the passage as the Holy Ghost intended the devout believer to appropriate, it may be well to recall a fundamental truth upon which St. Paul's narrative of his sufferings proceeds. He asked the Lord to remove it, and the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Christian religion is personal fellowship with Christ I besought

the Lord, that is, Christ; evidently he means Christ, for following the answer, "My strength is made perfect in weakness," we have these words, "Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Christianity has an outward shape; its formularies of doctrine, its sacramental types, its teaching and devotional institutions, are its essential features, but are not the thing itself. Christianity is communion with another person. Christ my personal God, with me, in me, as it were, a part of me. In so far as I am the subject of this union I am a Christian, and no further; let me not deceive myself, no further. The religion of Jesus is not knowledge, is not action, is not influence, is not usefulness, it is conscious union with Jesus. Its degrees are the degrees of growth, but in every degree it is union. The having a second self with you may have a beginning so strictly seminal in its character as to be hardly perceptible to you. The great self draws near, loving you first and awakening the earliest

longings of fellowship, the dawn of the new friendship, and then calling out your appreciation by the arts and ministry of love, until the smaller self, thus attracted, nourished, and possessed, expands from a faith that felt after something, to a knowledge of the thing sought.

In studying the personal religion of Paul, which the ample materials of his labours and letters enable us to do, we shall perceive that it consists of the mutual action of two minds, of Christ and Paul always in concert. It would be a very inadequate description of it to say that Paul was a believer in Christ, an enthusiastic and consistent follower of the Great Teacher, and an ardent propagandist of the Christian faith. It was rather a walking with Christ. It was strictly and literally fellowship. Paul does not speak and write of some one in whom he believes, but of one who is present with him while he speaks and writes. He does everything jointly. His co-partner is never absent; and has the chief share in everything that is said and done. He does not consult a doctrine,

but a living authority; he does not report an instruction, but writes a dictation. His very life is the breath and thinking of another. Need I quote passages that must be present to the reader in confirmation of this account of Paul's religion? "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21). "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

This is not pre-eminently Apostolic piety, but Christian piety; the abiding in Christ which He himself explains and declares in the parable of the vine. Is this my religion? Have I a conscious union with the person of Christ? The question relates, not to any present emotion I may have; feelings are passing states, and it is not always possible to say what one feels, and not always safe to interpret the true condition of the soul by an emotion. But is it a fact that I am sensible of another presence within me? So far as I can know, would it be a correct account of my state to say, Christ in me, I in Christ? The

answer to this question will determine not the degree but the reality of my religion.

I besought the Lord; I besought Him who has thus united Himself to me, who has taken express charge of me and my work; by whose gifts I live, and for whose service I live. I besought Christ, my almighty, everlasting, and inseparable friend, to take this heavy and insupportable affliction from me.

We must here imagine, to feel the force of the position of Christ and Paul towards each other, how closely they were joined together. The love of the greater One first drew the lesser mind, redeeming it from darkness, guilt, and death; the heart of Paul, no longer alien, clung in newly-awakened affection and gratitude to its deliverer, and the union was in this way rooted in love; the covenants mutually endorsed, and the responsibilities accepted, had that mixture of passion and precision which, as we observed in the second chapter, distinguishes the legal transactions of love. There was the tenderness and depth of

love, and the fidelity of oaths in the affiliation of Christ and Paul. They loved each other; they were bound to each other eternally.

We may remark in passing, how wonderful that this can be a description of God and man; that the infinite Creator can stoop to take into personal and permanent fellowship a creature He has formed, and simulate equality, hiding the oppressive attributes of Deity, and only letting such parts of His ways appear as may help to cherish and encourage that offspring mind into greatness, and unto the possible limits of assimilation into the likeness of Himself.

Respecting one part of their intercourse, namely, the intercommunication of desire, it would be proper to say that Christ commande and Paul prayed; Christ's wish was law Paul; Paul's wish was supplication to Chri Now we can conceive that Paul, imperfec sanctified and matured, might fail of obedien in himself he was infirm and sinful, expose the suggestions, the allurements, and the w nesses of sin; he might, in a moment of forb

forgetfulness, be wanting in promptitude, heartiness, or consistency, and merit for the time the distinction of "unfaithful servant." But we cannot conceive of Christ's being unfaithful to Paul. We must accept it as a necessary and logical truth, that on Christ's part there would not only be no failure, but the accomplishment of every result proposed by the union between them; that the infinite love of Christ for Paul would honour all the obligations of the fellowship, and cover in plenary fulfilment its hopes and capabilities. Paul was in distress; —it is not needful, as we have intimated, to inquire into the cause of that distress—it made the Apostle an acute sufferer. He prayed his Master, his friend, his other self, his Lord, to take the trial from him. "I besought the Lord;" the meaning of the original word is, to summon a friend to attend one in trial. To whom should Paul go in trial, whom should he summon to his aid, but the friend that is more than a brother? He entreated Him thrice to come. At the first call He came not; at the

second there was no answer. Paul was now in the Gethsemane of sorrow. The Master had thrice prayed in the garden of agony that His cup might be taken from Him untasted; it was not taken from Him, He drank it, and we live. The servant is not greater than his Lord. Thrice did Paul's anguish break out into prayer, that the cup might pass from him; it did not pass from him, he drank it, and we have his testimony to the all-sufficiency of grace. Would He of the tender heart and the sympathetic mind, He who is *touched* with the feeling of another's infirmities,* have allowed, in the body or mind of one He loved, a single pang, but for some consideration paramount to the pang? He Himself shrank from suffering because He was a man. None knew so well as He what that is in pain which makes the flesh and heart creep with terror. He saw the beginning of that most painful visitation; He knew the weight of its pressure upon Paul's spirit; He saw Paul resolutely

* Heb. iv. 15.

bearing up against it, before the sufferer ventured to pray for its removal; He had watched the strong mind giving way until the tear of weakness would be held back no longer, and the supplication, broken by fear and distress, cried out for succour. And yet, although He saw all this, and realised it by the most intimate sympathy, although His suffering saint was as the apple of His eye, as precious and lovely in His sight as her first babe to the mother, He allowed the instrument of torture to remain with Paul; He allowed prayer, and, perhaps, strong crying and tears, to appeal once, twice, without a response, and when the answer did come, it was not the answer desired. The torture must remain, the heart and the flesh must still mourn. And why? Because Paul was not kept upon the earth for his own sake, but for Christ's sake, to be a chosen vessel of the Master. As an Apostle it was needful that he should have manifold gifts and revelations, and the splendour of his endowments dazzled the sight of the churches; but it was also necessary

for the equipoise of the character that these should be balanced by personal humiliations. He must show to the Church in his own experience, as well as in his verbal teaching, that the eloquence of angels is the tinkle of a cymbal, and the far-reaching eye of prophets, the faith of miracles, the martyrdom of zeal, and the bounties of philanthropy, are all vanity, *without love.* His preaching and life would have been simply thrown away if he himself had not been devout, humble, holy, the embodiment of his doctrine, the example of his illustrations, the logic of his arguments. Paul was his Master's contribution to the church and the world. But the friend was not lost in the servant. Christ made His servant efficient, even at the expense of the inclination and physical tranquillity of His friend; but a wealth of recompense was in store for the sufferer. "My grace is sufficient for thee." Thou hast My grace, that shall suffice thee. Grace is the goodwill of love, it comprehends everything that love will do for you. It is not, My strength is

sufficient for thee, My guidance, My consolations, My visitations of succour, but My favour is sufficient for thee. Christ loved Paul, and all that Christ had was Paul's.

Imagine, if you can, Christ's ministry of love laying everything under tribute for Paul's advantage. Christ possessing all things in heaven and earth, all remedies, all helps, all gifts, all time, all space, all creatures, all states, destinies, and powers, and these available for use at any and every moment; the all-possessing and encompassing Christ, loving Paul! And let this thought interpret for us the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee." *Sufficient.* The meaning of this word must not be overlooked. It comes from two words which signify to put into the place of another—to supply it—and thus to do as well as another would or could. Paul did not obtain the blessing he asked, but he received something else that did as well. He besought freedom from pain and from humiliating weakness; he cried out against them, for it seemed as if he could bear his trial no longer.

He did not ask release from labour, or immunity from stripes; he bore upon his body scars from the lash of the Jew and the rod of the Roman. He accepted these wounds as the brand of his Master's name; he gloried in them, and was willing to have them renewed. But this trial, the one cloud of his life! It was easy to bear everything else; it was hard, hard to bear this. Perhaps he considered that it impaired his capacity for usefulness; he could do far more work for the Lord if it were removed; he asked for deliverance, not selfishly, but in the interests of the Church; it was a chain that fettered him. Would not the Lord break it and enlarge his liberty for work? Perhaps it touched his pride; it humbled him in the presence of his brethren and his converts. They were free from it, why should he be afflicted with it? Why should he suffer the perpetual rebuke of taste and contrast? The Lord had answered his other requests, why should this prayer be denied? But when, instead of the blessing he sought, there came

in its place another blessing; when, instead of less of pain, he had more of God; when the vacancy in the human was filled up with the plenitude of the Divine; he not only ceased to desire the removal of his trouble, but he was glad to retain it, and was thankful for it. He no longer talked about inadequate capacity for service; grace was his capacity: he no longer mourned the humiliation of contrast; the weakness of Paul should more vividly display the strength of Christ. What did he live for? What had he been redeemed, pardoned, and sanctified for? And as for the talents he possessed, and the gifts that supplemented them, why had they been bestowed? Was it not that Christ should be glorified? Was not this the only purpose of his life? Who was he, Paul, that he should consult a personal wish if it stood in the way of his Master's honour? *My strength is made perfect in weakness.* Weakness is the proper sphere for the manifestation of the strength of Christ. If, at any time, more of Christ can be seen in you when you are weak

than when you are strong; when you are in pain than when you are in health; when you are laid aside than when you are at work; when you are in humiliation and sorrow than when you dwell in public favour and complacency; when you are poor than when you are rich, it is not only your duty to submit to the inferior condition, but to accept it as Christ's appointment of a state in which you can best serve Him. He will take care that you shall be no loser. In whatever measure He becomes a gainer by you, His recompense will come into your own bosom a hundredfold.

CHAPTER V.

DAILY RENEWAL.

"THE inward man is renewed day by day" (II. Cor. iv. 16). The inward man is that part of our spiritual nature which is the seat of resolution, of trust, and of desire. We may call these the sources or motives of a man's inner life, that is, he acts according to their promptings or suggestions. Paul uses the same words in his Epistle to the Romans: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (II. Cor. vii. 22). Here it means his judgment and conscience as enlightened by the convincing Spirit of God, even while he was yet in bondage to sin. We ought to notice a phrase of St. Peter's closely resembling this verse, "The hidden man of the heart" (I. Pet. iii. 4). In all these instances reference is made to those faculties which direct and govern the soul's life, the central power

being the will, which may well be called the spirit of the mind. When you have a man's will you have the man. It is the will which makes the man a person; it is the self of the mind.

Having stated what is meant by "the inward man," we must explain two Scriptural expressions of a similar character, "the old man" and "the new man." They occur in these passages: "Our old man is crucified with Christ" (Rom. vii. 6). "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man who was created after God in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 22). You will perceive from these examples that the old man is the old unconverted self, the misguided faculties and fallen affections of which justify the Scriptural epithet "*corrupt*" or corrupting, decaying, losing power and shape, for want of a uniting life; and that the new man is the regenerated mind, also called *a new creature in Christ Jesus;* the will changed

to filial submission and obedience to God; the conscience raised from a dead to a living sense, answering keenly to gracious impressions; the trust, no more a gross confidence limited to the material world, but an assured faith of the soul, resting upon the invisible Christ; and the affections, including admiration, reverence, thankfulness, and love, delighting themselves in heavenly things, and finding their home in God; in one sentence, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). This is a reminiscence from Isaiah, "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth. I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert" (Isaiah xliii. 18, 19). No wonder of this kind, such as the surveying of prairie wastes and penetrating them with roads to connect countries they formerly divided; no construction of canals in deserts, and driving rivers through them for transit and irrigation, can compare with the revolution that follows the Spirit's work upon the

waste and arid soul. The breath of God passes over the old mind, and the seasons of growth, of light, and of harvest, are born and abide there, and the wilderness and solitary place are glad for them. What a beauty in this work of converting old things into new, age into youth, winter into spring, the very grave into a womb of life!

Let us return to the expression "the inward man." We have seen that the new man is the inward man new born, and the text declares that the new birth or the new creature born, is kept alive and advanced in growth by daily renewal. We are regenerated once, we are renewed by perpetual accessions of life. We must keep sharply apart these two words, "regeneration" and "renewal." They are so divided in the words of Paul, "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus iii. 5). Here is the new life brought to us by the baptism of the Spirit, and subsequently renewed in us by the same Holy Ghost. In th

first instance we are passive, just as a child is in the case of its own birth. It seems to have nothing to do with its birth, but it has a great deal to do with the maintenance of its life. We do not bring about our own regeneration, but we are parties to the ministry of our daily renovation. Before the Spirit quickens us we are dead; we begin to live when He breathes. We partake, it is true, in the pangs of the new birth; the new life costs us many a struggle after the germ has been given, but that germ was not formed by us. And now, living because the Spirit has made us live, our life must be renovated "day by day." With regard to our infancy, the mystery of birth and the laws of embryo growth are hidden from us. Long before we can recollect, we had been; our earliest memory is associated with wants and their supply, sorrows and their redress, the surprises of perpetual novelty, and the consciousness of progress. And so, although we may not be able to describe accurately the process of our spiritual birth, we remember our new wants,

our crying unto God, our clinging to Christ, our quiet when we were in His arms, our disquiet when we thought we were not, our simple wonder and gladness, our haste, our errors, our groundless fears, and other marks of the new childhood.

Being thus regenerated or born of God, in other words, the inward man, the will, the conscience, the judgment, and the affections, being changed into a heavenly nature, and into heavenly functions, by the breath of the Holy Ghost, in connection with our personal acceptance of Jesus, how is the life so begotten to be sustained and advanced? This is the answer: *The inward man is renewed day by day.* The renewal of life is so common an operation of nature, that I need hardly refer to the animal and vegetable world around us. Existence is continued by incessant renewal. The losses of yesterday are repaired by the provisions of to-day. The very expenditure and dying out of life is an arrangement for the bringing in of new life. The green life of field and forest is renewed day by day. There are two causes by

which this renovation is produced: the organisation of the plants themselves, and the action upon them of soil, air, light, and shower. If we speak popularly, we say that the renewal is annual, not daily, for Nature lives through the year, dies, and revives with the spring. But, strictly, the dying and the renewing go on through all seasons. The common eye which sees with glad surprise the first footprints of the spring, was not able to watch the hidden life ever renewing itself, and biding its time for the birth of the year. Nature in her depths, as well as upon her surfaces, is always spending her energies and always repairing them. The operations of vegetable growth are so like the advancement of our spiritual life, that the Great Teacher was ever illustrating His doctrine by it. We have the various fates attending it in the parables of *the Sower and the tares*,* we have its mystery and its inevitable gradations in the parable of *the corn seed*,† we have its wonderful strength and expansion in that of *the*

* Matt. xiii. 3—24. † Mark iv. 26.

mustard seed. And more significant than all, we have its renewal from death used by our Lord to prefigure the harvest glories of His own resurrection, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."* The inward man grows in the midst of perils that may arrest its growing, grows secretly, and if the conditions of increase are observed, grows with inextinguishable vigour, and into indefinite expansion. If we illustrate by animal life we shall only repeat the same law, and yet we must dwell upon this illustration, because it helps the teaching of this verse even more than analogies from the vegetable world. It will be easy to appeal from our physical experience as possessing animal life to our experience as Christians, and I do this with more confidence, because the conveyance grace to the mind, and the action of the mi upon the grace brought to it, are described our Lord in the very terms that designate

* John xii. 24.

peculiarities of animal life; "Blessed are they that hunger." "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger." "I am the bread of life; he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." The blessed Sacrament, which perpetuates the memory of His death, is a discerning of the Lord's body and blood through the symbol of food distributed and partaken.

How is the perishable outward man renewed while it lasts? By the daily repair of daily waste. *Day by day*, because our time is divided into periods of activity and repose, answering exactly to our physical wants. God has ordained our seasons for us, making us live a day at a time. We may rebel against this order, and reverse it, but we never carry nature with us; we transgress at the peril of our health; food and digestion, labour and sleep, in seasonable succession, are the unalterable conditions of bodily health. In respect of daily wants, supplies, and repairs, the inward man is like the outward man. It sounds like a familiar fact, because it seems consistent and natural that

similar laws should guard the material and the spiritual man, yet I am persuaded that the experience of Christians generally, answers so imperfectly to it that the doctrine may be considered new. The fact is, we decline in spiritual life without perceiving it, and when haply some mournful failure recalls to us our weakness, we humble ourselves before God, and, it may be, then and there renew our strength. It is a *lapse* that sends us to God, and not a healthy appetite for supply. Many Christians just sustain a bare life, if it be a life, by fits of earnestness after longer or shorter intervals of torpor. I do not suppose that meantime there is any positive interruption in ordinary religious duties; for there may be a decline down to death itself, and yet every outward act go on as usual, the closet service, the family service, the public service of prayer.

But to show the necessity, not of a renewal upon occasions of emergent want which happen at uncertain periods, but of daily renovation, take a day's history of any spiritual feeling, say that

of faith in Christ. You go forth in the morning to the work and trials of the day, with your mind resting upon Jesus; your faith in Him has been renewed by the Holy Ghost. Possibly it may not be a day of exceptional trial; we have indeed supposed it to be an ordinary day; but you no sooner leave your room, or your house, than the strain upon faith begins. You have to withstand the materialism of the week-day world. Your senses, your feelings, your covenants, your responsibilities, have to do almost exclusively with matters you can see, and touch, and taste. No one asks after your faith in Jesus, or cares for it; it may be, and often is, admitted by general consent to be a thing in the way. In any case, there is no sympathy with it, and, worse than all, there is a traitor heart within, full of deceivings, in league with the world against you and your faith. Poor faith! who can wonder that it staggers under the pressure of so many evidences against it, or that it droops for want of encouragement, like an exotic under an alien sky? It was strong in the

morning; it is wearied now. You have lived upon it, but care and distraction have suspended it, unforeseen trials have perplexed it, and the incessant action of material influences has exhausted it. Happy! to return home to be quiet with your God once more; to shut the earthly eyes, and to open the sight of the mind. There is Jesus the accessible Saviour, the immutable Friend. Here are the promises, great, precious, abiding; you feed upon them with the appetite of a jaded traveller or an exhausted soldier! You recover your strength; the day's trials have not injured your faith by taxing it; they have done it good, they have proved it, and if they have given you a lesson on personal helplessness, they have, so far, cleansed it, and made it more precious. You are equal to another day's exposure; the inward man has been renewed. But only imagine such a day, and no renewal! the exhausted faith of yesterday not freshened to-day! You venture into another day's perils and labours with a faith distracted and depressed, with a dull spiritual

sense. There is the material world, now taking you at great disadvantage; every enemy is stronger because you are weaker, and all the weight, the pressure of duty and care, is a double burden, for you have only the departing strength of yesterday to bear it. The faith of the inward man has not been renewed to-day. But suppose a third day's unrenewed faith, and a fourth! the opposition of the world, the temptations of sense, the trials of work ever renewed, and your faith not renewed. Need I express the result? We read of sudden lapses into sin; there is no such thing. The inward man was prepared to fall; there had been no renewal for many days, and the enemy threw him down as a child might push down a giant already sinking for want of food. What matter the big bones of his arms and the bulk of his frame, if the muscles are flaccid, and the blood spare, and the man gone!

We hear of persons who were once lively, active, useful Christians, becoming sceptics; questioning the reality of the truth which once they prized above rubies. Such men may tell

me they see reasons now for repudiating their former faith. I affirm they do not repudiate their faith, they lost it by neglect long ago; it died out for want of renewal long before they changed their opinions. The books and conversations of scepticism found them with a dying faith, simply expiring because there had been no renewal; scarcely a desire for prayer, no relish for Christian talk, no motive, worth anything, for attending public worship, and scarcely a perceptible relation to the unseen world. With a soul thus Godless, strengthless, is there any anti-Christian error a man might not be induced to accept, from Popery down to Mormonism, from Rationalism down to blank Atheism? Is it not easy for a man to believe in the inefficacy of prayer when he prays to no purpose himself? Is it not easy for a man to entertain doubts of the inspiration of the Word when that Word has ceased to yield him counsel or comfort? Is it not easy for a man to encourage questions as to the divinity of our Lord, when he has long ceased to maintain a living communion with

Him? And in cases which are far more numerous, where Christians have not lost all their life, or apostatized so far as to deny the Lord that bought them, but where, nevertheless, there is frequent backsliding for ministers to mourn over, and the Church to be ashamed of; where there is slackness instead of cohesion in the fellowship of saints; where the worldly spirit is dominant and the heavenly spirit faint and obscure; where hands, instead of working, hang down, and heads, instead of leading, dispute and divide. Are not such instances of personal decline and of collective failure in a Church the legitimate issue of holding a spiritual profession and position without the daily renewal of spiritual strength? How can the inward man in the Church preach in the pulpit, receive what is preached in the pew, hold to it through the week, maintain a level line of consistent piety amid the depressions of evil report, and the elations of good report, discharge the duties that pertain to the house of God, to the family, and to

the world, and bear the disappointments, vexations, and graver trials incident to each, unless its life be renewed day by day?

The spiritual losses of those in whom there has not been a daily renewal are incalculable. They have been renewed occasionally, otherwise they would have no life at all, but not "day by day." To this omission, and to this only, we may put down every sin and shortcoming of which we can accuse ourselves—our leanness, our weakness, the limit of our usefulness, our chronic distrust of God, the lukewarmness of our passion for Christ, the mistakes of life, the miscarriage of plans, the miseries of doubt, and the pollutions of sense. We may put them all down to the neglect of a common law, which in temporal matters we always observe, but which in this instance we disregard; I mean the law of demand and supply. And now, for the sake of our salvation, for the sake of whatever body of Christians we may belong to, above all, for His sake, who is glorified in the fruitfulness and dishonoured in the sterility of His vineyard, let us

reconsider this whole question of personal renewal. Let there be from day to day a readjustment of the periods of supply. We can only live by the present communications of the Holy Ghost. Our faith in Christ is not a thing we can lay by like an historic fact, to quote and use when we happen to want it. We can no more set it aside than we can dismiss our life and retake it. Faith in Jesus is life, and not historic recognition. Ask the unhappy one who once leaped for joy at the sound of Jesus' name to recall his faith in the Crucified One! Listen to the sad musing of his spirit—

> "Where is the blessedness I knew
> When first I saw the Lord?
> Where is the soul-refreshing view
> Of Jesus and His word?"

Our experience of yesterday must be renewed to-day; there must be daily prayer, daily dedication to God, daily meditation in the Word, daily feeding upon Christ, and then there will be daily conformity to the image of Christ, for the attainment of which we were re-born.

CHAPTER VI.

HOPE IN GOD.

(Ps. xlii. 11.)

THE Psalms of David have this eminent virtue, they transmit to us the experiences of ancient godliness, and enable us to affirm that godliness, like God, is unchangeable. These compositions, thousands of years old, represent the counterpart of our own life, and might have been written yesterday. In this Psalm, for example, every afflicted soul will find its anguish described and its expressions anticipated. Jonah had read it and remembered it in the whale's belly, quoting the verse, "All thy billows and thy waves passed over me" (Jonah ii. 3). Our blessed Lord, the antitype of all sufferers, condescended to put the mighty grief of His own heart into the 6th verse, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." It is the classic collect of all Christ's mourners. Its charm consists

in the perfect naturalness of the sorrowful strain. That strain never flows equally. Its expressions are irregular, inconsistent, chequered; like the devious ways of a mountain stream, now precipitant and dashing and foamy; now hidden in some black cavern passage; now reappearing on a green slope and catching the rays of the sun, gliding amid flowers, as if it had never known trouble, but resting not until it finds peace in the quiet lake below. Christian trouble, like Christian faith and Christian joy, is unique; it is a thing by itself. Misfortunes cease to be common when they smite the man of God. The outward distress of poverty, of loss, of bereavement, of desertion, awakens altogether a different class of emotions from the feelings of the natural sufferer. The Christian is in the midst of a larger area of consideration. His sentiments touch two worlds, his estimate of all things is measured by the fact of his immortality and the external rule of God's revealed will. His faith fortifies him against calamities that break the

spirits of other men; and on the other hand, it makes him more sensitive to certain deprivations or reverses that hardly touch the common life. He is in the highest sense the happiest of men, and the greatest sufferer. I speak of cases where comparisons of temperament and condition will show all other things to be equal. The Christian's depression is frequently groundless, and more frequently in excess. But even groundless or inordinate sorrow is not the less a trial to the man who cherishes it. We carry about with us our own standard of honour, of duty, and of privilege. On our right hand is Christ, in closest fellowship with us; whose perfect goodness rebukes by a shocking contrast the unlovely selfishness, weakness, and harshness of our own character; on our left hand is the World, always too near to us, and never so distant as to obscure from our sight its hard materialistic atheism; while its snares, set for the feet of the unwary, demand from the Christian pilgrim the most painful and exhausting vigilance.

Moreover, the Christian's life is not a destiny but a venture; he is running for a prize, he is fighting for dear life. He believes that the issue of his efforts, whether fortunate or disastrous, is simply enormous; success is everlasting life, failure is the ruin of his entire future: so he reckons; and in proportion to the keenness with which he realises his position will be the strength and capacity of his emotions. Now, as emotions are for the most part of a mixed character, uniting the mental and the sensational elements, the varying health or progress of a man's bodily condition is a large part of the field upon which the Christian's life-battle is fought. The complexion or outward aspect of a man's life will in some greater or less degree depend upon his physical temperament: it affects all other conclusions but those that are simply intellectual; if not happily composed, it is a perpetual *casus belli*. Sometimes in the form of strong lusts warring against the soul; sometimes in the ugly shape of an incurable disease; sometimes in an occult affection of the brain; or it may be, and

often is, a sickly refinement of the nervous system; and of all these bodily adversaries the imagination is an ally: not so much in the fight itself as in the field-service of our foe, dispatched to frighten us by false alarms, or to tempt us from our ground by a trick. When to all this we add a spirit of evil which in some unexplained manner is permitted to distress us by his suggestions, and to attempt our ruin by his devices, having access apparently to both body and soul, and that, while he leads on worldly men the captives of his will, it is his special ministry, in every possible way, to harass the godly, we have condensed into a few sentences, that admit of indefinite enlargement, the ground and the adversaries of our conflict. In the face of odds like these we might ask with the Apostles "Who then can be saved?" And our Lord's words are startling in their appropriateness: "Strive to enter in" (Luke xiii. 24), *i. e.*, agonise to be saved! With a weak faith, a deceitful heart, a thousand physical ills, and, it may be, our own circle of worldly life un-

sympathetic or hostile, as the ordinary features of our trouble, the impediments that beset us daily, what shall we do when there is an exceptional rising in the tides of affliction? If, as the matter stands, the footpace of the journey wearies us, what shall we do when the rushing of events compels us to contend with the speed of horses? If the ordinary path of duty and endurance makes our heart and flesh fail us, how shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? These flood-seasons of trial are appalling! When deep calleth unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts! when afflictions from several directions collect upon us! We could grapple with any one of them singly: but when there is a coincidence of reverses, in escaping from one we settle into the toils of another, and can deal with neither; and like David we are struck down and stunned with the noises of contending elements, and are at our wit's end. David himself shall furnish from the historic notices of his Psalm a perfect illustration of this confluence of troubles.

When David wrote it he was apparently stripped of everything. As a king, he was for the time discrowned, fleeing like a hunted and panting hart from the swords of his own people ; as a father, he was pierced by the keenest of all weapons, the weapon of a son's rebellion—Absalom being at the head of his pursuers ; as a man, he had lost honour and confidence, by crimes for which, as a king, he would have put any other man to death : and although God had pardoned him, man had not forgiven him. And the effects of his sins, for this rebellion was a fruit of his own conduct, surrounding the poor monarch, and the upbraiding note of public opinion which every breeze brought to his ear, suggested a doubt whether the Lord had pardoned him or not. Such a suggestion was encouraged by an incident that occurred during his flight from Absalom. David and his followers were making their way down the eastern slopes of Olivet, to cross over the Jordan. From a little *village* on the side of the hill, called Bahurim,

there issued Shimei, who ran along the rib of the mountain over against the king's party, and hurled stones upon them, and foul abuse. You can pitch your voice an immense way when the air of a valley is still and the mountains keep silence, and the words of this coarse Benjamite came down the hill and struck on the ear of David like the ping of a musket-ball: "Come out, come out, thou man of blood, thou man of Belial. The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul; the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom, thy son: and behold thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a man of blood" (II. Sam. xvi. 5—10). David's imagination was so wrought upon by this adventure, which under other circumstances would have been a contemptible annoyance, that he thought for the time Shimei was inspired. "Let him curse," said the king, "for the Lord hath bidden him; the Lord hath said unto him, curse David!"

After this there was nothing against himself which he was not prepared to believe: there was

but a step between the inspiration of Shimei and the anathema of God. David was a brave man, a man of genius, a man of the world, mighty in counsel and in arms, and at the time of which we speak, a man of years; and yet he was like a frightened child if anyone hinted that the Lord had forsaken him. There were ungodly men about him who played upon this liability to panic, which they considered his weakness. Probably these men had their weaknesses—running away when the battle grew too hot for them, deserting their posts when the responsibility or service was too heavy for them! They were brave enough against the fear of the Lord; it was nothing to them to hear that Jehovah had forsaken Israel, it was death to David. He says the reproach was a sword through his bones, the only sword that dismayed him. It made him long to fly back to the covert of the mercy-seat: there he would give an answer to his revilers. It was a beautiful custom among the Jews to kneel in exile with their faces *towards* Jerusalem, or if unable to maintain the

literal direction, to look towards it with their minds. While the waves of God were submerging Jonah, he cried, "I am cast out of Thy sight; yet will I look again toward Thy holy temple. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple" (Jonah ii. 4, 7). So Daniel in his house in Babylon was accustomed to closet himself in a room whose window looked toward Jerusalem.

As David could not yet return to the sanctuary, he would look towards it, and this saved him from despair. It awakened the memory of better days, when he went to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day. Then the countenance of God, shining from between the cherubims, flooded his soul with light, and sorrow and sin disappeared. O that he could once more throw himself even upon the step where the doorkeeper stood, that he could kiss the very dust of the sanctuary floor, and catch even the reflection of a ray of the beauty of the Lord!

When the face of God is hidden from us, and we scarcely know why, when in the midst of several troubles we are stunned or distracted by a clamorous tumult of pains, doubts, mortifications, and shame, calling to each other, ringing the knell of our peace as if quietness were being buried for ever, it is a sign that all is not lost if we have the power, even for a few moments, to call up the remembrance of the past. It is the first step in the method of restoration, as taught us by the Holy Spirit Himself. It saved David more than once. He introduced it as a war-note into a national anthem which he composed for his people—"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will *remember* the name of the Lord our God" (Ps. xx. 7). Another Psalmist, Asaph, has caught the same note. He was sinking in seas of trouble, and took hold of remembrance and clung to it, like a poor mariner in mid-ocean hanging upon a spar, "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will He be favourable no more? His mercy clean gone for ever, doth His prom

fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious, hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies? And I said this is my infirmity, but I will *remember* the years of the right hand of the Most High" (Ps. lxxvii. 7—11). And so David in our Psalm; "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." 'I am in the wilderness beyond Jordan, and here, though outside the boundary of the inheritance of Thy people, I will make these bushes and the clefts of these rocks a house of prayer: for whither can I flee from Thy presence? And even amid the roar of calamities the sigh of the prisoner has a distinct sound for Thee.' It was difficult for an ordinary Jew to realise the presence of God away from His Tabernacle, but he could do it if he earnestly sought the Lord. It is impossible for us to sympathise fully with their reverence for localities. Perhaps David found some help from the spot upon which he was now encamped. It was Mahanaim, the place where

Jacob saw God's host, and close to the memorable scene where the Patriarch wrestled with God and prevailed. He might well cry out, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God." Thus the complicated adversities and sufferings of David made him long to bring his burden to the Lord. He was crushed by their weight; reason and health and faith threatened to give way: but prostrate beneath his load he was able to look toward the sanctuary, and this glance saved him. If there was a mercy-seat for all who could look towards it, why was he cast down? The thought restored him to a rational position.

There is a spirit in man as well as a soul; a power that reasons as well as a power that feels; they lap over each other's region, and they have a beautifully concurrent life when life's events harmonise with the judgment of the one and the sympathy of the other; but in a time of suffering the burden rests with greater weight

upon the soul. The shame and mortification of a sin, the disappointment of a hope, the missing of a prize, the realisation of a loss, these and similar trials press upon the *soul* of a man, and not unfrequently they bring down the *spirit* with them; and when they do so, the light that should guide a man out of his troubles is quenched. He cannot take a rational estimate of his position; his judgment is overpowered by his sensibilities; it seems helplessly to sanction all that he imagines; his loss is a thousand times greater than it is; his hope is gone never to reappear; his sickness is certainly unto death; his reverse is the setting in of a tide of misfortune; everything evil is exaggerated, everything good is minified, until a man becomes the devil of his own torment, and makes the hell that he fears. The result is often suicide, or a despair that strands a man's life, and makes him as indifferent to all subsequent changes as a ship struck on the beach is insensible to the waves that break over her hull. But when a man's spirit can rise above his soul, when the thinking

power is in the ascendant, and he can reason with his disturbed passions, there is hope, and when there is hope in God, there is salvation.

Hope in God. He is called the God of hope; He is the author of the natural faculty of hope; He has made it the inspiration of human progress; for it causes even the prosperous man to disdain his present success, by putting a better ultimate before him. It is the angel that is sent to strengthen us in the sorest crisis of a conflict, and it becomes to our strongest and fiercest foe an evident token of perdition, but to us of salvation and that of God. It goes not out in the human breast with other lights which age, sickness, and trouble may quench, such as fancy and sense, and even love and reason. Hope burns to the end, because it is the candle of the Lord :—

> "And still as darker grows the night,
> Emits a brighter ray."

Now, when this natural faculty of hope which comes from God, and which, when it has no human support, can still live on and give

strength and comfort, returns to God, fixes itself in God, God's hope dwelling in God, we are connected with Him under conditions of deliverance and progress equally certain and glorious. He has caused us to hope in Him; it is the offering of the Father's hand to a wandering child; will He withdraw it to elude the clasp of His little one? It is His beckoning of us to come to Him; will He, as we are trying to approach Him, suddenly hide Himself, and leave us to chase some *ignis fatuus* of our own imagination? We are hoping in God, with God's own hope. Let these reflections help us as our spirit sits in judgment upon our soul.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" Is it guilt, the consciousness of sin, and the appalling cloud of God's displeasure? Do these press upon thee and surround thee? Take this condition at its very worst; when the soul is not only disquieted, but cast down, prostrate; where there is everything to discourage all exertion to rise; where sin has always been the

victor; where every fresh start in a better direction has been baulked; you have lost faith in resolution, and you have been deceived so frequently by the failing of a sympathy, a counsel, or an example upon which you had fondly reckoned, that you have lost faith in man; and you have found so little result from prayer, that you have settled down into the habit of expecting nothing from it. You have not only disquiet, but sullen inactivity. Sin has become not only a darkness, a shame, a fear, but a mire; plunging does not extricate, but involve in lower depths. Put the condition, I say, at its worst: no hope in self; no hope from further human instruction and sympathy; scarcely a hope in prayer; and such a shock to the understanding that every basis of religious trust seems giving way. What is left? *Hope in God!* If there were no provision for you, you might hope in God; if your case were an unprecedented one, and you were lying under the eye of your Maker in a condition of woe to *which there* had never been a parallel, it would

then be the natural and befitting action of your mind, while it could act, to hope in God. But *now* your case—and it may be worse than I have described—is not only intelligible, but is the very condition which moved God to open the Heavens that He might come down to remedy it. This condition of yours explains the incarnation of God, and the teachings, the temptations, the sufferings, and the death of Jesus. Your moanings give a meaning to Calvary. There is no Calvary unless there be a poor lost sinner like you ; there is no reality in the blood of the slain One, if there be no sin like yours to wash away. Your condition and Christ's work explain each other. This converts hope from a vague, wistful, shadowy expectation that help may come, into the definite assurance that help must come.

CHAPTER VII.

AGAINST VAIN THOUGHTS.

(Ps. cxix. 113.)

I HATE thoughts that uselessly unsettle my religious convictions.

I have certain convictions, that the Bible is the Word of God, that God is my Father, and that Christ is my Saviour. I hold these convictions absolutely. I know that the truths upon which they rest cannot be disproved. I have accepted them unconditionally. I do not for a moment imagine that there are discoveries and arguments in store that will compel me to relinquish them. I do not say, they are true so far as I am able at present to judge. My convictions are not hypothetical. I am not waiting to see what effect an advancing opinion may have upon the truths I most assuredly believe. You may be able to say very much against them, and assail them in a style to me un-

answerable; you may draw your objections from sources to me unexplored; you may possibly stagger my confidence. But I hate your thoughts and reasonings against the Bible unless you can give me in its stead a surer word. I must have a revelation from Heaven. I want it, every human being wants it. You can no more reason a man out of that want than you can reason hunger out of him when you withhold his food. If you refute this Bible and give me no other, no better, your thoughts against the Bible are vain, and I hate them.

I believe in Jesus Christ; I know that He gives pardon and peace; and that one result of this happiness is a pure life, pure in every relation of it; that another fruit is contentment in every change, and another, serene fortitude and complete victory in death. You may attack my views of Jesus Christ; you may produce a thousand reasons to show that I am in the wrong; that Christ is a very different person from what I have regarded Him; that He did not perform miracles; that He did not make an atonement

for sin; that He is not gone to prepare a place for me; that He has vanished, never to reappear. Now I am a sinner: we will not quarrel about words; if you prefer another phrase, I transgress the law of my nature; I say, the law of God. I have not power to restrain passion, to plant circumspect and holy steps, and yet I have so deep a conviction that I ought to be upright that, judging from analogy, I have a persuasion that ruin will come upon me if I do not walk uprightly. This makes me uneasy in affliction, and unmans me in the prospect of death. If you take my Christ from me—Christ as I conceive Him to be revealed—you leave my sins upon me, and a sinful nature unchanged within me; you deprive me of the assurance of Christ's personal presence; you rob me of a trust that gives peace and provokes holiness; you strip me of the power to be holy; you leave me possessed of a horrible fear of wrath and ruin; you leave me solitary in sickness and to fight single-handed with death. You reply, these *are imag*inations, the fruit of a narrow training.

Call them what you please: you cannot touch the fact of their results. See what you do: you take from me all that is mighty in the transformation of character, and you give me back all that is weak. Show me a man that has been made holy and peaceful and triumphant by that which you call Christ, and I will exhibit a multitude that no man can number, who have been raised from personal depravity to the practice of righteousness, and from social humiliation and miseries, to morality, order, and felicity, by the Christ we preach, the crucified and risen Christ. If, therefore, your thoughts about Christ can do nothing more than unsettle a belief which has delivered me from sin and despair, giving me nothing in its place possessing equal efficacy, or any efficacy whatever, they are vain, and I hate them.

This is not said in a spirit of intolerance, but in defence of convictions more precious to me than life itself: convictions which you can distract or unsettle, but cannot supplant by any firmer or more vigorous belief. The man who whispers

into my ear a suspicion tainting the whiteness of the good name of my family, and cannot or dare not do more than whisper, is a coward and a villain, and it would not be intolerance, but justice, to treat him as such ; and the man who would seek to disturb my confidence in Christ by an insinuation which he wants the courage to follow up, or at which he stops because he suspects it cannot be followed up and made good, is either a fool or a devil, and probably both. I have but one House in this bleak world; it was the homestead of my fathers before me ; it is too humble to tempt the covetousness of the rich or to awaken the jealousy of the mighty ; the spoiler can take nothing from it, the great can fear nothing from it ; I venerate it for its family history; I prize and love it. Once a terrific storm exploded over our heads ; we ran in for covert ; the rain descended, the flood came, and the winds blew and beat upon it, and it fell not ; we were timid, but safe. On that occasion many buildings far loftier and *more showy* than our little nest, fell wit

crushing ruin upon the heads of those whom they promised to defend. You advise me to quit the dear old dwelling; you say its architecture is out of date, and there are rumours that its foundations have at last begun to give way: that the secret underminings of Time are only preparing it to be overthrown by the next tempest. But when we ask you for a safer retreat, you shake your head, and say that is not the question. But with me it *is* the question. You may prove that every stone of the building is unsound, that the chief corner-stone of which I boast is a legend of the house, and not a component part of the edifice; you may show me what appears to be a crack here and a crack there; you may make out such a case of threatened or probable dilapidation as will be to me unanswerable, for you are cleverer than I; I have no skill in argumentation, and am poorly furnished with logic and language; I have no reply for you but my own experience, and that experience is summed up in two words—Salvation hitherto! And if I

can record that day by day, I have the best guarantee for salvation to the uttermost. The old House stands yet; and if you can tempt me from its massive walls to move about with you from place to place in theoretical tents, taking refuge under canvas that the next gust will rend and scatter to ribbons, I shall deserve my fate.

"How weak the thoughts and vain
Of self-deluding men:
Men who, fixed to earth alone,
Think their houses shall endure.
How happy then are we
Who build, O Lord, on Thee!
What can our foundation shock?
Though the scattered earth remove,
Stands our house upon a rock—
On the rock of heavenly love."

I hate thoughts that in my own mind lead to nothing. I speak of thoughts that idly muse on vanity or vainly brood upon affliction. The mind is either directly engaged upon a definite pursuit, or indirectly occupied with its *own* imaginings. It is impossible to make the

mind sleep. Whether we have anything to think about or not, think we must. In the intervals of direct application, the mind, with great subtlety and swiftness of change, plays or sports itself, sometimes with recollections, sometimes with anticipations, sometimes with imagination and fancy, calling up persons, scenes, situations, felicities, and catastrophes; and awakening answerable emotions; and because the imageries are unreal and the emotions actual, the mind and the body together command for themselves a secret world. I say the *body*, because of the sympathy of the brain and nerves with the mind itself, a secret world, the epitome of the larger world outside, of its labours, its cares, its disorders, its sins, its change. I said the epitome: I should have said the creator of the world outside; for such, in a certain sense, it is. Now, the vain thoughts which in my own mind I hate are not those fugitive states of recollection or of fancy that occupy or amuse the attention between the intervals of direct mental

work, for they make no mean part of life' pleasure. They gratify, as children are please to move their limbs about. But when thes thoughts break away from discipline and maste resolution, and become the staple material c imagination and feeling, then I hate them— dread them. I should dread them as a man wh wished to cultivate his intellect; for the min has no adversaries so dangerous and so difficul to subdue as vain thoughts of this class. As Christian, I fear them more than I fear the devi I can resist him, but in the whirlwind of its ima geries the mind can neither believe, nor pray, nc think. It kindles and burns with the swift fierce ness and all-enclosing destruction of a prairi fire, and it is "set on fire of hell" (James iii. 6

But even when these thoughts are not ou masters, when they come in by our permission an disperse at our command, they steal upon ou attention by such subtle gradations of associa tion that they seem to belong to the subject c business engaging us at the time; we ar *not aware* of their presence until we are unde

their spell, and they entice us to waste many an hour in profitless musing: opening a sorrow after God had closed it; reviving or nursing a resentment when reconciliation had professed to kill it; or toying with some fancy, foolish or criminal. How often have these vain thoughts stolen our time, and taken our peace with it! How often have they weakened our faith, intercepted the flight of our prayers, and brought them fluttering to the earth as a fowler wings his bird! How often have they haunted us in the house of God, bursting in upon the mind when treading with fear the floor of the Mercy-seat, like drunken revellers carrying their carousals into a temple! How often, even when our mind has been bright and tranquil and heavenly, when apparently we have been as far from danger as from fear, has some sudden gust of feeling brought a cloud of these locusts, darkening our very prospect by their dense swarms, and alighting upon the harvest and vintage of the mind, they have eaten up in an hour the produce of a year!

I shall presently speak of a remedy for vain thoughts; but let me, before leaving this part of the subject, add a word of advice to the youth of the Church. Perhaps your greatest danger springs from the power of undisciplined thoughts. Your imagination is sensitive and fertile, and what is a dreamy meditation with us, is a vision with you. Would you be guarded against vain thoughts—thoughts that rob you of time in study and business, thoughts that decoy you into by-paths of sin, thoughts that sap insensibly, not the ground of your confidence, for that cannot be moved, but your confidence itself in those things that are most surely believed among us, avoid vain books! Hate them! Books that contain no information, books that hold up no mirror to Nature, but a glass of deceptive surface in which her features are grossly exaggerated, books that are written for an immoral purpose, to practise on the passions of the young, for gain. A chapter from such books is like a dram from a gin-palace: it stimulates, but does not strengthen; it impairs

the digestive organs, lowers the tone of the system, and diminishes its power of resistance against any passing sickness. There is perhaps no symptom of moral disease in the present day that gives the Christian worker more uneasiness than the unrestricted diffusion of a corrupting literature.

My remedy for vain thoughts is the word of God: "Thy law do I love."

The word law must be understood here popularly of the Scriptures, the Word of God. And the qualities of the word which support the antithesis of this clause are *certainty* and *ascendancy*. I will guard myself from thoughts that would selfishly disturb my religious convictions, by dwelling upon the certainty of Thy Word—the certainty of it as proved to my own mind, not as assured to me by another human witness. The Christian reads the Word of God for himself; he receives help from the human teacher, but cannot receive the assurance of the truth from another, except from the Holy Spirit. The Word of God draws us to the study of its

doctrines by gracious invitations, and encourages our application and prayer by promises. When these promises are fulfilled in us, when the forgiveness pledged to us is ours by faith in Jesus, then we have an experimental hold of the Word. We love it as the oracle of God's mouth: as the fountain whence we drew the waters of life. The ancients of the world tell us in the Word itself what it did for them in their days and in the times of old; and by comparison we know that it accomplishes in us precisely the same results. The thoughts of wicked men have ever been directed against it. Where are those thoughts now? Through many ages this Book itself contains the only record of them. There is a promise of God. It comforted Abraham, it sustained Moses; it awoke prophetic life in a long line of seers; it was partly fulfilled in the earthly life of Christ; it is now being consummated by the heavenly work of Christ. That promise is still the comfort of the Church; it is your support and mine. I love the law because *of its certainty* and steadfastness. But what is

the law? what is the Word? It is the expression and exhibition of a covenant that existed before the expression and exhibition of it: before man was created: before the heavens were built: before the angels were born; infinite periods before the first angel sprang into existence, in the uncreated mind of the Deity there was the covenant between the Triune God and the yet to be born human race; there was the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8), and the predestination that all who believed in Him should be conformed to His image; every arrangement was perfected there; every promise was made there; and they were all ages old when these old heavens were young. When I believe in Jesus, poor and fleeting as I naturally am, the ancient steadfastness of the covenant passes into me; I receive a truth which to me is a kingdom which cannot be moved. Shall I allow the unbelief and scepticism of this modern world, this world of yesterday, to affect my standing on the Rock of Ages? "I have vain

thoughts, but Thy law do I love." I love it because it is always the same.

The next quality of the law by which we may be guarded from thoughts that are vain because they lead to nothing, is its ascendancy in the mind. To master the desultory and quickly-escaping states of the mind is one of the chief results of high education; but however well a mind may be trained, unless it continue to have some commanding object to engage its powers, the vice of aimless musing and ungoverned imagery will assuredly revive. Now, the Word of God in the mind of the believer has an unchallenged authority; and if we simply yield up ourselves to its power, it says to one thought, Go, and it goeth, and to another, Come, and it cometh. It is able to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II. Cor. x. 4, 5). But not merely as an unrivalled authority does it exist *in the mind*, but as a law: not in the sense

of being a standard of right, but as the voice of the Spirit dwelling in the Word and in us, giving forth positive enactments, and sweetly compelling the mind to a life of obedience. The whole law is within us, because the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us. But the ascendancy of the Word is seen not only in authority and positive law, but in revelation. It discloses to me through vistas that lose themselves in glory the inheritance of the saints in light. Here is scope for the most ardent desires, the most creative imagination, the most active fancy. Imagination is no longer an evil enchantress conjuring up shapes, scenes, and situations for the gratification of vanity, pride, and covetousness; faith converts her into an angel, to unlock for us the gates of Paradise, and display the city, the countless citizens, and the Lamb in the midst of the throne. I hate vain thoughts and meaningless imageries that satisfy no want, and lead to no resting-place; but Thy law do I love.

CHAPTER VIII.

"FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH."

WHERE does the struggle lie? Where it did, and where it ever will lie—in the conquest of self for God, which is: first, to accept faith in God as the highest condition on earth of a human being; and secondly, to subordinate in the pursuit of it, either for use or temporary subjugation, every faculty, every passion, and every circumstance in life.

In regard to the first, we may say at once that faith will never become theirs who place it lower than the highest state of man. If it be objected that it is scarcely fair to the present condition of the human mind to insist upon a prejudgment on the nature of Christian faith before we begin to examine its claims, we may answer that the prejudgment on which we insist affects not the premises of the examination, but *the* motive of it. We do not say, before you

begin to investigate the subject you shall assume that it is true, but you shall assume that if faith in God be a reality, the realisation of that faith is the highest conceivable state of man. In the midst of our frailty and the mortifying boundaries, both of life and of mind, entailing upon all, even upon those who are most fortunate, the consciousness of perpetual failure in seeking to attain one's hopes, we have the glimpses, if not the definite prospect, of a better life. We are able to conceive of a life which, could it be attained, would be perfect ; and that perfect life which we sometimes shape to ourselves is never the victory of unbridled passion and a prolonged triumph of self. No intelligent man in his sober moments thirsts for a heaven like this. That to which a man would wish to give immortality, is the consciousness of mental growth—a rare and beautiful pleasure—and the joys of friendship, when the union of two minds is based upon love and identity of pursuit, and is cherished by mutual help and gladdened by mutual discoveries of excellence.

as the hidden graces and worth of character come more and more into light. These are what no honest and thoughtful man, let him belong to what nation he may, and profess what belief he may, would willingly let die. This has been the heaven of rational men in all countries, where there has been no surer light than human reason. It has engaged the speculations of the deepest thinkers, and inspired the best literature. If, then, the consciousness of mental growth and the joys of a noble friendship are states of life which every educated mind conceives to be the sublimest happiness of which we are capable, where is the difficulty in assuming that faith in God, supposing that such a thing exists, is the highest state of man? For mental growth and the joys of friendship are the fruit of the fellowship of man with man, of mind with mind. But we are supposing the fellowship of man with God the Creator of mind; who planned its personality with the faculties, passions, and conscience which constitute *that* personality; who framed for its

habitation a body, who made the outside world, and ordained that wonderful system of impressions by which the spirit of a man is connected with external nature and educated by it. When faith unites me with God, there are two sources of growth: *first*, the natural effect upon my own mind of contemplating that which is infinitely higher than myself. By striving to know One who is too great for me ever to know perfectly, but whom I am invited and encouraged to know by the conscious progress I make in this knowledge, my faculties are in the condition of a constant and healthy strain, and necessarily expand. The *second* source is not so easily defined, but as a fact it is equally distinct—namely, the positive help communicated by the greater mind to the lesser. St. Paul expresses this truth perfectly: "The same Lord over all is rich unto (or toward) all that call upon Him" (Rom. x. 12). That is, if any one, be he Jew or Gentile, place himself by meditation and prayer under the sympathetic notice of the Divine presence, there will flow out to him unmeasurable

streams of sympathy, of love, of revelation, that shall act upon his strained faculties and upon his growth as a flood at the roots of a parched tree; and as for that other element of happiness, the joys of a noble friendship, faith in God means friendship with God; and whatever be the desirable aspects of human friendships, whether they take their origin in family life, from the parent and the maturing offspring, or from the elder and the younger brother, or whether the affinities of taste, pursuit, or likeness, draw two minds together, the purest conditions and the noblest features of human intercourse are comprehended in indefinite capacity in our communion with the Heavenly Father. If it be said that the idea of the Supreme Being is too vague from its vastness and want of representation to awaken friendship in the worshipper, we reply that sympathy, trust and love may flourish in a fellowship in which one of the parties is scarcely able to know anything of the other, as in the case of a young child, *whose affections* thrive upon the simplest im-

pressions and the mere touch of contact. But even supposing this objection could be made good as an abstract truth, it falls to the ground in the Incarnation of Christianity, where the mystery of godliness is not in its obscurity, but in its revelation—"God manifest in the flesh." In Jesus Christ we love God when we love man; in the Maker of all men we behold the brother of all men; and with the reverence, the trust, and the obedience inspired by the godhead, we have the physical sympathy, the mutual suffering, and the common destiny, which are the cords by which one man is drawn to another. Our faith in God through Christ is not merely friendship with God, but is the model and inspiration of the entire circle of human relationships without their frailties and their limitations. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother" (Matt. xii. 50).

We cannot believe this and hold it fast without a struggle, though this struggle is not com-

parable to the conflict which we shall have now to consider. There are not many persons who find it difficult to accept faith in God as the highest condition on earth of a human being, and even those who do may discover the source of their difficulty in the second part of our subject, to which we shall now invite the grave and earnest attention of the reader—viz., that, in seeking to obtain and preserve faith in God, we must subordinate, either for use or temporary subjugation, every faculty, every passion, and every circumstance in life. Here is the fight of faith; we do not contend here with metaphysical objections, or with the obscurities and imperfections of rational evidence, but with hurtful lusts which *war against the soul*, with pride and undisciplined desire, with those idols which the mind makes for itself and which gratify its covetousness, its sloth, its envy, its bigotry, its self-glory, and its hatred of subjection. Here the contest is with self. If, in seeking faith in God, thy right eye offend thee—for let us quote *from His teaching* who knew what was in man

—if that which belongs to thee, which was created by God Himself for thy use, is perverted from its use, and interferes with that within thee which is higher than itself, mortify it, put death into it, even though its disuse mar the symmetry of thy life. It is more profitable for thee that thou should'st do without it ; it is for highest interests that these temporary losses and humiliations must be incurred. Observe, that every man must determine for himself what is the stumbling-block of his path. Our Lord by suggesting three, the right eye, the right hand, and the foot, covers everything which is supposed to minister to pleasure and advancement. By treating rudely the most delicate and sensitive organ of the body, and by disabling that which gives uprightness, support, and locomotion to the frame, the Divine teacher shows that the finest and most cultured sentiments may be in our way ; and that the strongest and, considered in themselves, the noblest principles, principles which were made to lead men on, may have a fatal bias, and make them

step aside instead of marching forward. I need scarcely add that our Lord intends also to indicate the exquisite suffering of the self-mortification which he demands. It is in the first instance personal, solitary, and prolonged agony. We do not here include the fight which we maintain as a Church against the unbelief of the day, against the selfish spirit and bold wickedness of the age. In this public conflict we may take our part with a very small amount of self-mortification; we may get behind the brave and share the cheer that properly belongs to them: the veriest cowards in their heart may be on the winning side, and imagine that they also merit the distinction of victors.

Christ is the essential genius and power of our daring, of our endurance, of our success. He takes part with us in any honest resistance which we make to evil; and there can be no victory without Him. He agonised to enter the straight gate of submission—"Father, not My will, but Thine be done"—that when you *should be in* the anguish of an eager yet doubt-

ful endeavour to surrender your will to Heaven, His sympathy and omnipotence might ensure your triumph.

You who are discouraged because you have been so often defeated, and find it hard even to revive a resolution to try again, lift up one thought of prayer to Him, and He will descend and place Himself at your side in a moment; and if you will take Him into your inner council of war, and place the cause of the conflict into His hands, you shall never fail again! It is true that His arm and shield will never so act as to take from you the necessity of fighting, but the battle will no longer be yours, but the Lord's. Every blow you give to lust, to covetousness, to pride, to untruthfulness, you deliver in His name, and He will take care that you shall deliver it in His strength. But not merely is Jesus the Lord of the battle of life to be resorted to in seasons of conflict; you can never be victorious even in these seasons, unless you make Him the Lord of all seasons. You must make over to Him the entire sphere of your life,

and this surrender of yourselves will bring you into so intimate a relationship with Him that you will rather walk by faith than by sense, and intellectual difficulties, if they do not vanish, will cease to be impeding to progress; while the more obstinate resistance of the flesh—which word I use in its widest meaning—will gradually die into simple passiveness, and your life in its springs, its course, and its issues, will be Christ.

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